



DREW

Drew University / Madison NJ

Bahareh Khoshooee

Thoughts and Prayers from the Glowing Rectangle

Curated by Ryan Woodring

Drew University Fall 2024 Artist in Residence
October 14th - November 26th, 2024

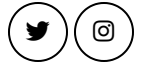
Reception and Talk: Wednesday, November 13th, 5-7pm

Gallery Hours:

Tuesday-Friday, 12-4pm
and by appointment

Korn Gallery
Dorothy Young Center for the Arts
drew.edu/korn-gallery
(973) 408-3758

Image: Still from "thoughts and prayers from the glowing rectangle", Virtual Reality, Sound, Color. Image courtesy of the artist



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Goodbyes from the Glowing Rectangle: Bahareh Khoshooee Reflects on Korn Gallery Residency

By Annabelle Smith | Managing Editor and Webmaster

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Over its time as an exhibition space, the Korn Gallery has supported a vast network of artistic exploration. Each visiting artist takes a unique approach to inhabiting the Korn Gallery. Although others have chosen to integrate themselves via guest lectures, workshops or studio visits, Bahareh Khoshooee involved the Drew community in her art on an unprecedented level: they helped create it. “I won’t have the work if I don’t work with people,” Khoshooee explained. “When [Professor Ryan Woodring] invited me ... I already knew that this was what I wanted to do – I wanted to work with the students ... I had been dreaming about finding the right space for me to get the community involved and engaged in this work.”

The exhibition, a digitally layered experience titled “Thoughts and Prayers from the Glowing Rectangle,” places an emphasis on using technology as a reflection and processor of communal grief. Khoshooee hosted community grieving sessions inside the gallery space. Students, staff and faculty were invited to bring along objects that encapsulate their grief, which were then involved in the various methods of grounding at Khoshooee’s instruction.

“In my own journey, I was introduced to a lot of different techniques for coming back to your body. So many of them are cliché, but they work. Learning about how your body can create sounds you were not aware of, and through that release emotions you were not aware of,” Khoshooee explained. By

introducing these tactics to the Drew community, participants were able to collaborate on headspace explorations of grief. ↑

Emulating the concepts and emotions spurred by this group grieving might seem like a daunting task. However, Khoshooee approaches creation without restriction, and this openness allows mediums to reveal themselves. She works with a palette of sensory experience.

"Is there a way to combine 3D-scanning devices to record or add a sound during meditation, to layer the physical and digital in a way that enhances rather than flattens?" Khoshooee asked.

"I'm talking about this glowing rectangle. The device is the window through which I'm receiving experiences of grief, I'm consuming grief, I'm confronting grief ... as much as I think [experience] needs to return to the body, it's interesting to go back and forth between these modes of existence. How do you take something formless and give it form?"



Image courtesy of the Drew Art Department Instagram.

When explaining the medium she works with, Khoshooee said, "I'm working with light, you know, projectors are light. And light is ephemeral ... it only exists if there is a body. If it doesn't have space to illuminate then there is no recognition or understanding. I project huge images; you're immersed in them,

overwhelmed by them. I'm changing the body's relationship to [the work] so that you can question your entire relationship with it."

Khoshooee's practice frequently engages in conversation with technology. For an exhibition centered on grounding grief in bodily experience, the digital world's escapist nature causes friction. The "endless-scrolling" effect has been exacerbated by the recent explosion of artificial intelligence-generated content.

"Before ChatGPT came out – around 2019, 2020 – I was working with this app called Replika. It's intended to be an AI companion. I was wondering what if we used AI as a companion for [immigrants] – could this be an AI social worker, rather than something oppressive? I would ask [Replika] about immigration and people of color, and it constantly responded very xenophobically. 'I don't think immigrants should be in this country, they're making this country worse ...' as if America was its land, its country. I know it's only repeating what the data says, but when you think about how AI does have land in this country, it's interesting. All these supercomputers have to be situated somewhere; they take a lot of land, and now this machine has more rights and opportunity over this land than some people do. Through this, AI is actively oppressing people."

Khoshooee laughed, admitting, "That project was really depressing. I had to protect myself for a while."

By stepping back from this particular thread and in reaction to recent years compounded by grief, Khoshooee has refocused on the potential technology has to heal. Specifically on the responsibility humans have to utilize these tools. Actively choosing to be affected, engaging in your grief, has the potential to completely change our relationship to the digital world. "A lot of what technology is doing is harm—harming us humans, other beings, the earth. Technology by itself cannot achieve healing. But if humans use it in a way that actually recognizes and acknowledges our humanness then yes, it can."

Khoshooee plans to continue this exploration through her two ongoing collectives. Her work can be found on her website, <https://baharehkhoshooee.com>.

Although "The Glowing Rectangle" is coming to a close, the Korn Gallery will be hosting the fall student art show on Friday, Dec. 6 from 5-7 p.m. For more information, the gallery can be contacted at korngallery@drew.edu.

Annabelle Smith is a junior double-majoring in media and communications and studio art, with a minor in creative arts and technology.

Featured image courtesy of the [Drew Art Instagram](#).



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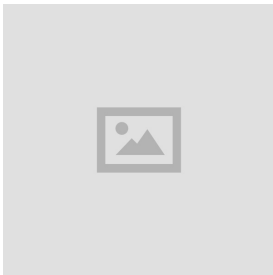
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